

Message Text

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SUBJ: SOLAR ENERGY POLICY REVIEW: POTENTIAL IMPACT OF SOLAR
TECHNOLOGY ON BANGLADESH

REF: STATE 145840

1. BANGLADESH HAS NO SOLAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. IT CURRENTLY RELIES ON HYDROELECTRIC POWER, ABUNDANT LOCAL NATURAL GAS AND IMPORTED OIL FOR URBAN AND INDUSTRIAL NEEDS. EXCESS HYDROELECTRIC CAPACITY WILL BE USED IN A RURAL ELECTRIFICATION PROJECT NOW UNDERWAY. RURAL HOUSEHOLDS NOW RELY LARGELY ON WOOD AND AGRICULTURAL WASTE PRODUCTS FOR COOKING FUEL. BDG REGARDS NATURAL GAS AS THE MAJOR SECONDARY SOURCE OF POWER FOR INDUSTRY AND URBAN USE. BDG ALSO HAS AN INFANT NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAM BUT IT IS POORLY FUNDED AND FAR FROM THE STAGE OF PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

2. HOWEVER, THERE IS A HIGH POTENTIAL IN THEORY FOR SOLAR-POWERED TECHNOLOGIES INCLUDING WIND AND PERHAPS WAVE POWER IN BANGLADESH. THE CLIMATE IS SUITABLE FOR EXPLOITING THESE ELEMENTS. THE MOST LIKELY POTENTIAL AREAS AT THE OUTSET WOULD SEEM TO BE SIMPLE SOLAR TECHNOLOGIES FOR RURAL
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USES, SUCH AS FOODGRAIN DRYING AND COOKING. FIREWOOD IS SCARCE AND EXPENSIVE FOR RURAL HOUSEHOLDS, MOST OF WHICH ARE EXTREMELY POOR. KEROSENE AND NATURAL GAS OR LPG ARE BEYOND THE MEANS OF MOST AND MANY HOUSEHOLDS CANNOT AFFORD TO BOIL WATER, WHICH IS OFTEN CONTAMINATED, FOR LACK OF CHEAP ENERGY. A SIGNIFICANT QUANTITY OF FOODGRAIN IS LOST THROUGH SPOILAGE, ESPECIALLY AFTER

THE SPRING "BORO" HARVEST, BECAUSE OF THE ONSET OF MON-
SOON RAINS WHICH HINDER SUN DRYING OF GRAIN.

3. BECAUSE BDG HAS NOT GIVEN MUCH ATTENTION TO SOLAR
ENERGY AND IS CONCENTRATING POWER DEVELOPMENT PLANS ON
OTHER ENERGY SOURCES, WORLD BANK AND OTHER MULTILATERAL
AND BILATERAL AID DONORS HAVE LIMITED AID IN THE ENERGY
FIELD TO HYDROELECTRIC AND NATURAL GAS DEVELOPMENT.
THERE ARE A FEW PERIPHERAL SOLAR ENERGY ACTIVITIES
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF "APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY" PRO-
JECTS SUPPORTED BY A FEW DONORS, BUT NOTHING SIGNIFICANT.

4. UNLESS THE U.S. COULD PROVIDE CHEAP APPROPRIATE
SOLAR DEVICES FOR RURAL USE, THERE IS LITTLE OR NO MARKET
AT THIS TIME FOR LARGE-SCALE SOLAR DEVICES FOR INDUS-
TRIAL AND URBAN ENERGY NEEDS, GIVEN RELATIVELY LOW-COST
AVAILABLE HYDROELECTRIC POWER AND NATURAL GAS.
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